(b) As posts falling vacant and being filled up is a continuous process, a certain number of posts do remain vacant at any point of time.

(c) It is not the policy of the Government to abolish all vacant posts. On the Railways, surrender and creation of posts is based on the needs emerging from the level of workload in various activity centres and changes taking place in systems of working and management of the Railways.

Gauge conversion between Pondicherry to Villupuram

3489. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the gauge conversion work between Pondicherry to Villupuram will be completed before the end of 1998;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) when the gauge conversion will be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No. Sir,

(b) and (c) The Work was included in the Budget 1997-98 with the proviso that the work would be taken up after obtaining the necessary approval of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission have not agreed to the taking up of this project for the present. The work is temporarily frozen and will be reconsidered once the resource position improves and some of the ongoing works get completed.

Extending of Ratnachal Express upto Vizianagaram

3490. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether requests have been received to extend Ratnachal Express upto Vizianagram in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the action taken thereon; and

(c) the reasons for not extending it early as only 40 minutes extra run is involved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Extension of 7245/7246 Ratnanchal Express upto Vizianagaram has been examined but not found feasible at present due to operational and resource constraints.

Expansion and Renovation of Railway Stations

3491. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether expansion and renovation of large number of railway stations has been undertaken during last financial year;

(b) if so, the names of such stations State and Union Territory-wise along with nature of work involved and estimated amount to be spent in each case;

(c) whether Government propose to undertake similar work as in (a) for more railways stations of country during current financial year; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (d) Modernisation of railway stations is a continuous process and works in this regard are taken up evey year wherever so warranted, subject to availablility of funds. There are more than 7000 stations over Indian Railways and works are taken up wherever justified according to traffic needs. During the year 1997-98 works in this regard were taken up at stations all over Indian Railways incurring an expenditure of Rs. 89.93 crore.

Information in regard to major modernisation works in progress and new works